

Giant cable companies should not be permitted to grow larger. Further consolidation in the cable industry is a clear violation of horizontal ownership rules that must be re-established to serve the public interest.

The concentration of power and control over distribution of media is a growing problem in this country. Though we have more channels available than ever before, they are under the operation of a handful of giant corporations.

If Comcast and Time Warner are allowed to merge with Adelphia, the two companies will control nearly 50 percent of the national market. This level of concentration in the cable industry will lead to higher consumer rates and

lower quality
service.

Since passage of the
Telecommunications
Act of 1996 and the
“deregulation” of
cable, consumers
have seen their
rates jump an
average of 59
percent — with some
areas experiencing
even more dramatic
increases.

We are required to
buy channels we
don't want or need
because the cable
operators bundle
them together. I
myself subscribe to
approximately 100
channels I have
absolutely no
interest in, just to
get the 30 or so
that I do want to
watch.

The quality of
customer service
often reflects the
fact that cable
television is not a
competitive market.
It takes me several
minutes after the

start of every call
to my cable company,
TimeWarner, to even
get a human
response. And once
I'm talking to a
human being, it's
usually crystal
clear within a few
questions that I
know more about the
problem and how to
fix it than the
customer service rep
does. I've have to
talk them through
fixing my broadband
a couple of times
now. And the
response to a
problem with the
cable is invariably
\"Unplug your box
for ten minutes.\"
Really helpful
during a live
broadcast (or the
season finale of a
favorite show).

Meanwhile, the cost
of cable modem
service remains out
of reach for many
households, holding
constant for years
and selectively
underserving rural
and low-income

Americans. The American people are watching the digital divide widen even as the need for access to high-speed networks increases.

If I were not provided cable as a perk of my part-time housekeeping/dog care job, I would certainly not be able to afford it.

Cable companies have become less responsive to the needs and requirements of communities. The quality of public accountability in local franchise agreements has declined, as big companies leverage their power to squeeze local governments.

In many communities, the truly independent sources of local news, information and culture come from the public channels produced at the

local access

centers.

Unfortunately, local channels lack the resources to produce the programming that citizens want and need.

TimeWarner of course provides a channel with its viewpoint (irregardless of the fact that many of the so-called \"news\" channels already provide the corporate viewpoint exclusively), but the local access channels here must be supplemented by a budget from the city to exist at all, much less be available to the myriad of diverse voices who would love to be heard.

The last thing we need is to reward the anti-competitive actions of cable giants by permitting greater consolidation in ownership, reducing competition, and encouraging more of

the same.